

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Lura A. White School
August 20, 2003

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson
Paul Wilson, Secretary
Bob Prescott
Hugh Muffoletto
Gary Bourassa (arrived at 7:15)

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent
Patricia Stern, Business Manager
Sylvia Jordan, Middle School Principal
Thomas Walsh, Special Education Director
Joe Deguglierlmo, DEAC
Deb Flagg
Judy Stanislaw
Joyce Reischutz
Rich Dill

Meeting was called to order at 7pm.

Public Participation:

As there was no public participation the meeting moved to discuss old business.

Hugh Muffoletto motioned to approve the minutes for July 21 and August 12. Paul Wilson seconded. Motion carries.

Payroll and Payables warrants were reviewed.

Warrants 303, 304, 305 and 409 were briefly discussed for the record. Meeting moved forward to discuss the FY02 Audit: Pupil and Financial Report of June 30, 2003.

Patricia Stern, Business Manager, spoke of the report findings for FY02. Overall everything is in good financial order. There were a few minor findings that Mrs. Stern went over with committee members. First of all, she mentioned the matter of the town placing certain revenues and expenditures in the appropriate places. Secondly, the auditors advised as to the best place to have recorded the expenditures for the walk-in freezer at LAW that was purchased approximately one-and-a-half years ago. Money for that purchase had been taken from various funds and sources. Thirdly, the report spoke

of how best to record revenues received as tuition and the expenditures associated with the Bromfield School student who had attended our school last year.

Schedule 19 was also discussed in the report. Mrs. Stern felt that this was the most important issue and she hopes that the committee will take some action regarding this particular issue. Auditors are suggesting that we sit down with the town side of government and discuss the best way for the town to charge us for educational expenses. A written agreement should be drawn up at some time in the near future as the DOE is becoming more strict regarding Schedule 19. The DOE will soon require written agreements be available for viewing. The last issue in the report involves where town and city records expenditures.

It was suggested that both school committee and selectmen set up a dialog on a variety of the above mentioned topics as well as other issues as well. Committee members were in agreement. Dr. Scott will set up a meeting in the fall.

Preliminary FY03 budget closeout was presented. FY03 budget has not been officially closed out yet as not everything has been received from town level to confirm.

Some of the main items that impact FY04 budget were looked at in this preliminary budget closeout. As a bottom line, approximately \$447,000 will be available to carryover into FY04. Any deficits that are reflected in the preliminary budget will no longer be there once bookkeeping transfers are made and info comes in from town to confirm numbers.

This preliminary budget differs by \$188,000 from the last time the committee looked at the FY03 budget in June because the Business Office took a conservative approach in determining the budget.

Items needed for FY04 budget had not been received until 5pm on August 20, 2003. At issue was how the School Committee could ask the town for an override when it appears that we didn't need one after all. Mrs. Stern advised that a number of changes had taken place since originally presented. Orders have been cut, as well as reducing the number of buses/routes. Additional FLLAC classrooms have been rented out and grants that were thought to have been cut have come through in the end. School Choice is always difficult to predict as well as Devens tuition.

The committee recommends that documentation be presented to both the committee and the public via newspaper to notify all concerned of the difficulties in predicting the budget. The members felt that without such documentation this situation may "tarnish the reputation" of the school department if we ask for overrides and somehow find the money after the override fails.

It was agreed that a letter would be available for publication and distribution at the next meeting regarding the override issue.

At next meeting the budget will review the budget and be ready to vote on it. In the meantime, teachers who had been let go can be reinstated as their salaries had not actually been cut from the budget. They are elementary Spanish, computer teacher and a part time band instructor.

Mr. Bourassa motioned to reinstate teachers and to continue the budget review at the next meeting. Mr. Prescott seconded. Motion carries.

The Middle School Handbook has been revised over the past year. Two main issues were covered in detail. Attendance policies and behavior expectations were the main issues.

Committee asked Sylvia Jordan, Middle School Principal, to revise the issue regarding the notification of police and/or parents of children who misbehave in school. Bus conduct issues were also discussed in regard to who to contact when problems should develop.

Mrs. Jordan promises a lot of communication between parents and teachers this year.

Committee members were pleased with the work that has been done on the handbook. Mr. Bourassa motioned to approve the Middle School Handbook. Mr. Muffoletto seconded. Motion carries.

Dr. Scott reviewed home schooling plans for Alexis (grade 1) and Megan (gr. 2) LaVertue, Melanie Farnsworth (gr.7) and Cassidy Manna (gr.1). Mr. Bourassa motioned to approve all home education plans. Mr. Wilson seconded. Motion carries.

A liaison between the Devens and Shirley committees needs to be established. Joyce Reischutz offers her service to the committee. The committee feels that a sitting member of the Shirley School Committee should actually have that responsibility. Mr. Muffoletto offers his services. Mr. Prescott motioned to nominate Mr. Muffoletto as the Devens representative. Mr. Bourassa seconded. Motion carries.

Dr. Scott explained that United Way contributions this year were the largest ever. Dr. Scott feels that this was due largely to this being the first year for contributions through payroll deductions and the Youth Ventures program funded by United Way.

Committee agrees to hold regular meetings every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month, beginning September 9. A meeting will need to be held prior to the September 9 meeting to discuss budget issues that needed to be readdressed. Committee agrees to a meeting on August 26, 2003.

Public Participation

Deb Flagg thanked the administration and school committee for the restoration of teaching positions.

Judy Stanislaw wanted the committee to know that school supplies have been cut this year to balance the budget. The school has a tight budget.

Rich Dill suggested that we update the Acceptable Use Policy in the student handbook.

Joe Deguglierlmo, Devens Resentative, was happy with the school budget changes and reminded those present that the budget had already been cut by \$500,000.

Joyce Reischutz liked the handbook. She suggested that MASC would review it free of charge. She cautioned that police could not interview students without parental permission.

A parent asked about the alternative plan if the middle school is not ready on September 8. She also asked about bus routes.

Mr. Wilson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:50. Mr. Bourassa seconded. Motion carries.